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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2566
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3216
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1508
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3561
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2947
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000905

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2019

TAGS: PGOV PINT PREL KPAO KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ ELITE CONCERNED WITH ISLAMIFICATION,
APPOINTMENTS AND ETHNIC NATIONALISM

REF: REF: BISHKEK 563

BISHKEK 00000905 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Classified By: Amb. Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: According to Aleksandr Voinov, the Director of the State Agency on Sports and Youth, President Bakiyev and the elite of Kyrgyzstan are growing more and more concerned about the Islamification of the country. They are looking for creative ideas to combat it and have even discussed the problem with Uzbek President Karimov. The Kyrgyz elite are also anxious about new appointments after the July Presidential elections, and many are hoping that Chief of the Presidential Administration Daniyar Usenov will be replaced. Voinov also reports growing ethnic nationalism among the elite and a movement to replace all non-Kyrgyz in high posts. END SUMMARY

ALCOHOL TO BATTLE MOSQUES?

¶2. (C) Over the course of several meetings with EmbOff, Voinov conveyed the high degree of concern among Kyrgyz government elites regarding the perceived growing Islamification of the country. Voinov claims that Bakiyev raises the issue often, and is particularly worried about the construction of new mosques in the country. Bakiyev told Voinov that he is nearly at the point of banning new mosques, but is under strong pressure from &unmentioned parties⁸ to allow continued construction.

¶3. (C) Voinov stated that Bakiyev has been looking to neighboring countries for advice and possible solutions. Bakiyev apparently discussed the problem with Uzbek President Karimov, who advised him to loosen alcohol sales in Kyrgyzstan so that the masses will learn to drink and reject a strict Islam that forbids alcohol. Bakiyev said he was leaning against such a policy, but was willing to consider it out of desperation. Bakiyev told Voinov that he hopes sports will give Kyrgyz youth an alternative to radical Islam and

therefore promised to increase funding for sports.

EXIT DANIYAR ("SHOW ME THE MONEY") USENOV?

¶4. (C) Voinov said that ministers and leading figures in the administration are nervous about their jobs in a possible reshuffle after the July Presidential election. He said that many are optimistic, though, that Bakiyev will replace Chief of the Presidential Administration Daniyar Usenov, who is disdained by most of the elite. Voinov says that Usenov has become the second most powerful person in the country since taking this job because Bakiyev gave him full authority to do whatever it took to ensure re-election. Usenov was already one of the richest men in the country. To hire Usenov, though, Bakiyev had to bend Kyrgyz laws to ignore Usenov's Kazakh citizenship.

¶5. (C) Usenov has not only threatened and bullied people since taking the job, according to Voinov, but has engaged in "personal corruption." Usenov, for example, tried to take over control of the profitable sports stadiums and concert halls which Voinov currently controls. Voinov took the issue to Bakiyev, who he says is aware of Usenov's corruption, and was barely able to convince the President to rule against Usenov. Voinov and several others have complained to Bakiyev about Usenov, but Bakiyev asked them to be patient and wait until after the elections so that he could safely dismiss Usenov.

COMING ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION?

BISHKEK 00000905 002.6 OF 002

¶6. (C) Voinov also complained to EmbOff about rising ethnic nationalism among Kyrgyz elites. As a half-Russian and half-Dungan (ethnic Chinese Muslim) political figure, he often feels ostracized in personal interactions and has many opponents who want to replace him with an ethnic Kyrgyz. He says that he and Prime Minister Igor Chudinov stand out more and more in elite circles as non-Kyrgyz.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) While we cannot confirm Voinov's information, much of it fits with what we are hearing elsewhere. The Deputy Minister of Education, for example, said that her top priority from the White House was not to raise educational standards, but to combat Islamic radicalization among youth. Usenov is certainly a divisive figure, though he did help Bakiyev win re-election, so his political future remains to be seen. Ethnic Kyrgyz nationalism does also seem to be on the rise, bubbling up in the mass media and political debates. END COMMENT

GFOELLER